



THE LATE DR J. W. B. GUNNING M.D.

OBITUARY : Dr. J. W. B. GUNNING.

WE regret to announce the death of the Director of the Transvaal Museum, Dr. J. W. B. Gunning, at the comparatively young age of fifty-two.

Born in Holland, on the 3rd September, 1860, at Hilversum, the second son of the late Professor Dr. J. H. Gunning of the University of Leiden, Dr. Gunning received his education in Holland and Germany, at the Universities of Amsterdam, Leiden, and Jena, taking his M.D. Degree at the last named university.

In 1884 he came to South Africa where he practised medicine. From his youth he had always been devoted to the study of natural history; but not until 1896 when he was appointed Director to the Transvaal Museum was he able to give his full time to the study of the fauna of this country.

When still a student his principle hobby was entomology and ornithology, and he received a medal of merit through the agency of the Leiden Museum authorities for a collection of birds and insects.

As Director of this Institution, Dr. Gunning started in 1898 by collecting live animals, and some ten different species formed the nucleus of the present Zoological Gardens. Through his own strenuous efforts and by the assistance of a sympathetic Committee this humble beginning has grown into not only the finest Zoological Garden of South Africa, but into one which would compare favourably with most of the older "Zoos" in other parts of the world. It was mainly due to the late Director's unflagging energy that the collections contained in this Museum have grown during his term of office to such an extent, that the late Transvaal Government, on representations made by the Committee of the Museum, provided a new building to house these valuable collections. This magnificent building was finished some time ago, and it is much to be regretted that Dr. Gunning was not destined to move and arrange the collections in their new and more fitting quarters.

However, the Museum now in use and the Zoological Gardens will remain as a lasting monument to the name of one who gave the best part of his life to the furtherance of the study of natural science in South Africa.

Dr. Gunning's scientific writings were not numerous; the greater part of his time was absorbed in the administration of both institutions and in enlarging the collections: this prevented him from paying such attention to working out scientific problems as had been his constant wish and ambition.

Dr. Gunning was a life Vice-President of the Transvaal Agricultural Union. Owing to his services rendered in this connection and to his keen interest in agriculture, the French Government were induced to bestow on him the order of the "Chevalier du Mérite Agricole." He was also one of the founders of the South African Ornithological Union and of the Transvaal Philosophical Society: and of both he held the office of President and Vice-President on several occasions.

As a token of esteem for and as a memorial to the splendid services rendered by the late Director, the Museum Committee have decided to place a tablet in the Museum to his memory.

C. J. S.
